

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, August 15, 1804 , from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE J. MSS. (JAMES MADISON)

Monticello, Aug 15, 04.

Dear Sir, —Your letter dated the 7th should probably have been of the 14th, as I received it only by that day's post. I return you Monroe's letter, which is of an awful complexion; and I do not wonder the communication it contains made some impression on him. To a person placed in Europe, surrounded by the immense resources of the nations there, and the greater wickedness of their courts, even the limits which nature imposes on their enterprises are scarcely sensible. It is impossible that France and England should combine for any purpose; their mutual distrust and deadly hatred of each other admit no co-operation. It is impossible that England should be willing to see France re-possess Louisiana, or get footing on our continent, and that France should willingly see the U S re-annexed to the British dominions. That the Bourbons should be replaced on their throne and agree to any terms of restitution, is possible; but that they and England joined, could recover us to British dominion, is impossible. If these things are not so, then human reason is of no aid in conjecturing the conduct of nations. Still, however, it is our unquestionable interest & duty to conduct ourselves with such sincere friendship & impartiality towards both nations, as that each may see unequivocally, what is unquestionably true, that we may be very possibly driven into her scale by unjust conduct in the other. I am so much impressed with the expediency of putting a termination to the right of France to patronize the rights of Louisiana, which will cease with their complete adoption as citizens of the

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U S, that I hope to see that take place on the meeting of Congress. I enclosed you a paragraph from a newspaper respecting Saint Domingo, which gives me uneasiness. Still I conceive the British insults in our harbor as more threatening. We cannot be respected by France as a neutral nation, nor by the world ourselves as an independent one, if we do not take effectual measures to support, at every risk, our authority in our own harbors. I shall write to Mr. Wagner directly (that a post may not be lost by passing thro you) to send us blank commissions for Orleans & Louisiana, ready sealed, to be filled up, signed and forwarded by us. Affectionate salutations & constant esteem.